

First of a Series on
HOLIDAY IN ANCIENT EGYPT

THE EXPEDITION TO PUNT
1477 B.C.

by

HARRIET SMITH

Raymond Foundation



Museum Stories, No. 367
October 1, 1960

The Expedition to Punt—1477 B.C.

Have you ever wondered what your life would be like if you had been born in some other country—how you'd be dressed, what sort of school you'd go to, how your name would sound in a foreign language? In these stories you'll have to stretch your imagination—not only across the ocean but also back across time for thirty-five centuries to the long-ago days when the ancient Egyptians were building a great empire.

Queen Hatshepsut was anxious to win the favor of Amon-Re, the Sun-God, so that her reign would be a happy and famous time in Egypt's history. She had her royal architect, Senmut, build a beautiful temple in honor of the Sun-God. Looking across the Nile River the citizens of Thebes could see the three terraces of the temple rising from the valley floor all the way up to the western cliffs. The last rows of gleaming limestone columns opened into the holy rooms of the temple, cut right into the rock wall of the cliff. But the walls behind the columns were still bare of carvings and no plants grew in the terrace gardens. Then the Queen told of a vision in which the Sun-God spoke to her, saying, "Search out the ways to the myrrh terraces and establish a Punt in my House."

Every morning the Egyptians could see the Sun-God rising from his home in the Land of Punt (south and east of Egypt), and everyone knew that burning incense, made from the sap of the myrrh trees that grew in Punt, pleased the gods with its scent from their homeland. But the dry, dead incense reached Egypt by trade, from tribe to tribe overland for a thousand miles. Now the Sun-God had commanded that *live* incense trees be planted on the terraces of his new temple so that he would feel at home there. The Queen gave this religious reason for sending out a great exploring expedition by sea to the



most distant country known at that time. But she also gave secret orders to her ambassadors to establish direct foreign trade with Punt, long known as the source of so many natural treasures. Her policy was to expand Egypt's power by peaceful means.

Now all five ships had returned to Thebes, the capital city. In these stories you'll spend the three most exciting days of their whole lifetime with five children who lived there just at the time Egypt was becoming the most powerful nation of the ancient world. You'll visit the estate of a government official, Lord Nehsi, and attend a party with his daughter, little Lady Merryat. You'll go hunting in the marshes with two boys, the sons of working men, and you'll spend a day at school with the son of one of the court artists. Then you'll meet them all again to watch a famous parade.

These stories tell of the celebrations: how all the strange and wonderful things from Punt were paraded in triumph in the streets of the city and presented to the Queen at her palace, how she picked out the choicest gifts for Amon, and how she summoned all her officials to the audience hall to give her "state of the nation" report. These events really happened, and many of the people you'll meet in these stories were really there—Queen Hatshepsut and her daughter, Princess Nefrure; the Chief Treasurer, Lord Nehsi, who actually did plan and equip the expedition to Punt; the royal architect, Senmut, who designed and supervised the construction of Amon's temple at Deir el Bahri as well as many other government buildings and monuments. Hieroglyphic records, statues, and picture-stories carved on the walls of temples and tombs tell us the names of these people, what they looked like, and how they became famous. Even the mummy of the pet monkey was found in Senmut's tomb with a bowl of raisins in its coffin. Other characters in these stories were real too—people whose work lives on to this day, like the court sculptor whose statue of Senmut holding the Princess Nefrure is in this Museum's hall of Egyptian exhibits and the reporter-scribes who were eyewitnesses and pictured the events of these stories on a wall of the Sun-God's new temple, where visitors can still see just what happened.

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Second of a Series on
HOLIDAY IN ANCIENT EGYPT

RETURN OF
THE EGYPTIAN FLEET

by

HARRIET SMITH

Raymond Foundation



Museum Stories, No. 368

October 8, 1960

Return of the Egyptian Fleet

As dawn broke over ancient Egypt's capital, two boys were already out hunting ducks in the marshes north of the city. The Sun-God's first rays were reflected so brilliantly from the golden-tipped towers of his Karnak temple that the boys turned their eyes from the glare—and became the first citizens of Thebes to see the royal fleet returning from Punt. As the Nile mists cleared, the boys could count all five ships—the biggest they had ever seen and so heavily loaded that the decks were almost level with the water. To these sons of working men it seemed a miracle that the explorers had survived the tempests and monsters that everyone had heard of in the lands outside the Nile valley. Most people in ancient times had no schooling, and their knowledge of the world came from travelers' tall tales and old superstitions.

The boys are only ten years old, but their bald-looking heads make them seem strangely old to us, for Egyptian men and boys of the working class kept their heads shaved. Ursu wears a linen skirt reaching to his knees and has palm-fiber sandals on his feet. You can tell that Saab, the smaller boy, is more used to an out-of-door life—he's barefoot and wears a much shorter kilt. He pushes aside the bulrushes with a light spear while his friend follows, carrying a throwing stick. As they slip quietly through the rushes, Ursu stumbles, and Saab turns to whisper, "Sh, Ursu! Your clumsy feet make so much noise!" Most Egyptians are rather small, and so Ursu seems big for his age. That's how he got his name. When he was born, his father exclaimed, "Ursu!" In the old Egyptian language this meant, "He's a *big* fellow!" (What was the first thing your family said about you? That might be your name if you'd been born in Old Egypt.)

Egyptian names usually described the person. Ursu's companion had been named Seneb-ir-au (Healthy-is-the-joy-maker) because his family was so happy to have this fine baby. But only the priest and the estate overseer called him Seneb now. While still a small boy he was nicknamed Saab (the Jackal) for his cleverness and the swift, quiet way in which he moved.



That's why Saab was always the leader in hunting, but when the boys wrestled or played tug-of-war, Ursu won.

Saab is already learning to be a hunter like his father, who is in charge of Lord Nehsi's game preserve—a sort of private zoo. An Egyptian boy didn't daydream about what he'd be when he grew up. Everyone expected him to continue his father's job, and by the time he was nine years old he was helping at work. Ever since he could remember, Saab had looked forward to the exciting life of a hunter and secretly felt sorry for his friend Ursu, who is learning to be a papermaker like *his* father. But to Ursu papermaking is a very important job. He likes to think it might have been his own great-great-great- (he can't count back how many "greats"!) grandfather who made the first paper from papyrus stalks not long after Egyptian picture-writing was invented. All this happened more than a thousand years before Ursu was born.

So today, while Saab has eyes only for the wild ducks, Ursu is noticing where the best patches of bulrushes grow. He and his father will come back to gather bundles of these papyrus stalks and soak them until the long fibers come loose. Whenever he watches his father pounding the long strands into strong white strips, Ursu tries to imagine the picture-writing some scribe will draw on the smooth paper. Perhaps the very sheet he helped finish last night will be used to tell the story of the expedition just returning from the strange land of Punt with gifts for the Queen. Tomorrow the tribute will be paraded in triumph through the city streets so everyone can see that Egypt's power is feared and respected to the ends of the earth. Ursu feels proud that his paper will last to tell of the wisdom and great deeds of the Egyptians long after Saab's ducks and fish have vanished from the cook pot.

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Third of a Series on
HOLIDAY IN ANCIENT EGYPT

IN "THE HOUSE OF BOOKS"

by

HARRIET SMITH

Raymond Foundation



Museum Stories, No. 369

October 15, 1960

In "The House of Books"

Though it was just after sunrise, Intef was late for school. It had only seemed a minute that he stopped to watch the royal fleet anchoring at the quay, but, as he found his copybook and sat down crosslegged on the floor with the older boys, he was worried to see the schoolmaster scowling at him. This was a warning that today even the smallest mistake in copying would earn him a beating. Teachers were very strict, for it was a popular Egyptian saying that "A boy's ears are on his back, and he hears when he is flogged."

A school in ancient Egypt was called "The House of Books" because there were no real libraries, and it was only in the temples, business offices, and schools that books were kept. Egyptian books were long rolls of papyrus, called scrolls, which were stored, standing upright, in big vases like umbrella stands. Intef quickly got out the box of ink-paints and pens he carried tucked in his belt and started copying from an ancient textbook of wise sayings with which a father, long ago, had taught his son good manners and right living. Intef carefully copied the picture-signs that said: "Don't talk too much, for a man's tongue may ruin him," "Never sit down while an older person stands," "Be not greedy at meals," "Set to work and become a scribe, for then you will be a leader of men."

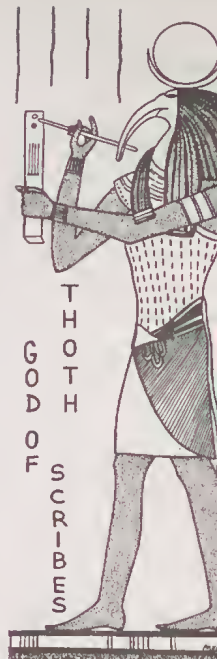
The youngest boys were practicing drawing hieroglyphics of birds and animals, men and gods, on whitewashed boards. Intef remembered how proud he had been when the teacher said he was ready to write on papyrus, which was too expensive to be spoiled by the clumsy scribblings of youngsters. On that very day he decided that, instead of leaving school like most of his classmates when he was twelve, he would try to win promotion to the School of Scribes.

Being a scribe was the most important profession in Egypt. You may wonder why being able to read and write should make a man respected and successful. Egyptian girls never went to school, and only the sons of wealthy families and a few poor boys selected for scholarships got any education. In the five or six

years of general schooling they learned the meaning of hieroglyphics copied from the textbooks they had to memorize, like the *Wise Sayings* and *The Book of the Dead*. But very few schoolboys, when they grew up, knew how to combine the picture-signs they had learned in the House of Books into the sort of sentences they needed for their letters and business records, and so most men had to hire professional scribes to do their writing for them. Thus a scribe could be sure of earning a living without having to do hard work, and only a boy trained to be a scribe had a chance to rise to a wealthier position than his own father's job. A popular legend told of a poor boy who studied hard—he even became one of Pharaoh's governors!

By midmorning the older boys had finished their copybook work and were over in a corner struggling with arithmetic problems. Their textbook was called *Instructions for Knowing All Dark Things* because being able to deal with science and mathematics was considered a sort of black magic. Intef felt sorry for his classmates trying to work problems in such a noisy schoolroom. All the intermediate students were shouting together at the tops of their lungs, reciting sections of *The Book of the Dead*—the main textbook and a best-seller too, since it was a sort of guidebook of magic spells and prayers to get the soul safely through the underworld journey the Egyptians believed everyone must take between this life and the life after death. The scholars always yelled loudest when they came to the spell to escape the Underworld Crocodile, hoping the words would soak through their ears to set more firmly in their memories. This rhyme began, "O thou who stealest the words from my tongue."

Intef tried to shut his ears to the noise until he realized the shouting came from the courtyard now. School was over for today, and tomorrow was declared a holiday so that everyone in Thebes could go downtown to watch the triumphal parade of the explorers with treasures from the Land of Punt.



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Fourth of a Series on
HOLIDAY IN ANCIENT EGYPT

GETTING READY FOR AN EGYPTIAN PARTY

by

HARRIET SMITH

Raymond Foundation



Museum Stories, No. 370

October 22, 1960

Getting Ready for an Egyptian Party

For weeks a little girl had run up to the flat roof of her home a dozen times a day to watch down the Nile River for the sails of the royal fleet. This morning Merryat thought she was still dreaming when she saw the five great ships anchored at the quay of Thebes, ancient Egypt's capital city.

Months ago the Queen had sent Merryat's father, Lord Nehsi, Chief of the Treasury, as leader of one of the first exploring expeditions in history. Now he had come safely home from the ends of the earth. Even as Merryat watched she saw a sailor running toward the gate. He brought a message from her father that he would soon be home and wanted all his friends invited to a banquet that very afternoon to celebrate his return.

Everyone would have to hurry to get ready for the party. Merryat's mother called all the head servants to her room. First she told the scribe (private secretary) to write invitations that messenger-boys would carry to the guests—all the noblemen and their wives and the government officials and high priests who lived near Thebes. She sent maids to pick flowers for decorations and ordered the chief steward (butler) to have Lord Nehsi's favorite foods prepared for the feast.

Before she herself dressed for the party, Lord Nehsi's wife inspected his finest linen robe to be sure it was freshly washed and pleated. His richest jewelry had already been polished by a maid, and now his wife chose a curled wig of black wool from the wig chest and smoothed out his false beard of braided hair.



Her husband wouldn't be wearing the beard for the party today, but he would need it when he dressed for tomorrow's ceremonies at the palace and temple. After his long absence, the Chief Treasurer must make a fine appearance—before his friends today and the whole city tomorrow.

There was so much going on that Merryat was out of breath from running: from the pool to the banquet hall and out to the kitchens, and then dashing back to the roof to see if her father was coming from the ships. Now she heard singing in the garden and ran out to watch the maids weaving flower buds and petals into wreaths for the guests to wear around their necks and garlands to wind around the pointed wine jars on their stands all along one side of the dining hall. Other servants were bustling back and forth bringing the best embroidered wall-hangings and finest rugs from chests in the storage rooms. A few tables and chairs were set up for the guests of honor, but most of the company would be seated on the rugs. The gardeners had brought melons and pomegranates from the fields and orchards surrounding the estate, and kitchen servants were arranging piles of the colorful fruits, along with dates imported from eastern lands, on the tables.

The busiest place of all this morning was the outdoor kitchen (we'd call it a barbecue patio) in the courtyard behind the house. Already geese and a big ox were roasting on spits over the fire, while the chief hunter and his men were still out in the marshes snaring wild ducks for the feast.

Again and again Merryat was drawn back to the kitchens, where wonderful smells told the menu for the feast. Best of all was the smell of the ten kinds of wheat bread and five kinds of cake baking on the outside of cone-shaped pottery ovens. The bakers mixed the dough with their feet as they added the honey and spices. They twisted the loaves by hand into all sorts of shapes—snail coils and wheels, stars, and even animals. One cake in the shape of a cow fell off and broke as a baker was taking it off the oven. He gave it to Merryat, but before she could taste more than a bite, her nurse came to take her to her room to get dressed for the party.

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Fifth of a Series on
HOLIDAY IN ANCIENT EGYPT

MARVELS OF THE LAND OF PUNT

by

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Raymond Foundation



Museum Stories, No. 371

October 29, 1960

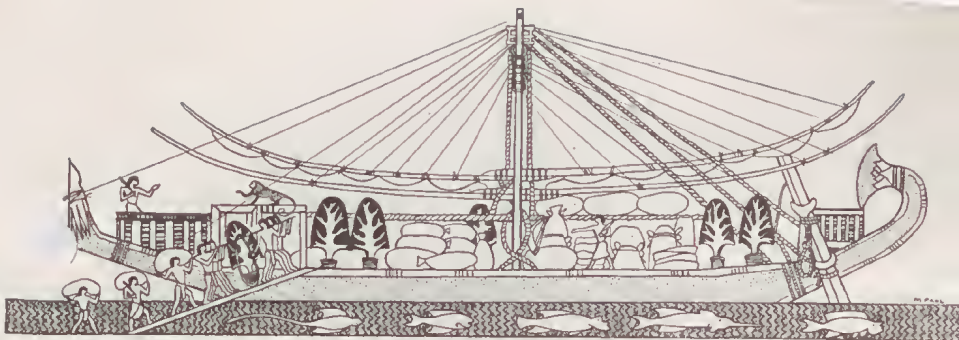
Marvels of the Land of Punt

Lord Nehsi had promised to tell his family about his adventures in the wonderful land of Punt, before his welcome-home party started this afternoon. His daughter Merryat was so afraid of missing some of the story that she could hardly stay still for her nurse to dress her for the party.

Ordinarily Merryat wouldn't have been so eager to leave her beautiful room. Stars were painted in gold on its blue ceiling, and a painted border of lotus flowers framed the door. She sat on a short-legged ebony chair, inlaid with ivory lotus flowers, and her bed was carved like a long, thin leopard. Since Egyptian rooms had no closets, her clothes were kept, neatly folded, in brightly painted chests. One box in the corner held Merryat's special treasures: an ivory paintbox, a leather ball, some seashells, and a doll of painted wood with jointed arms and legs and a wig of beads and thread. The doll was dressed just like Merryat, in a straight sleeveless dress of white linen and a wide enameled collar, bracelets, and jingley anklets (children used to dress like miniature grownups). Just as Merryat started out the door, her nurse called her back to put on sandals for this dress-up occasion.

After the bustle of the morning, the house seemed very quiet this early afternoon. The guests wouldn't be arriving for another hour, and now the family gathered in the garden to hear Lord Nehsi's story of his expedition: He told of the long voyage—of how the five ships were pulled through the old canal from the Nile to the Red Sea and sailed south for a month through blistering heat. "After turning east along the African coast, we saw groves of myrrh trees among the palms lining the shore and knew we had finally reached the Land of Punt. The natives scurried up ladders into their round, thatched huts, which stood like beehives on stilts among the treetops. Small cattle rested in the shade beneath.

"I had my headquarters tent set up near the shore, and our sailors unloaded the trade goods we had brought. Our piles of bronze weapons, rings, and strings of beads soon drew the Chief



of Punt out to greet us. As he strode ahead, his three children helped his enormously fat wife get off a meek little donkey. Amazed to learn we came all the way from Egypt, they looked on us as visitors from another world. My gifts to their Chief encouraged the Puntites to bring their natural products to trade for the things made by Egypt's craftsmen.

"The next day we set up the big stone statue we had brought of Queen Hatshepsut. And when I told Chief Perehu her command that live incense trees be brought from the Sun-God's homeland, he ordered his men to dig up the healthiest small trees and set them in baskets of earth. As an excuse for exploring inland to locate the sources of Punt's many treasures, I asked that the best trappers take me to capture a southern leopard as a special gift for my Queen. Back in the mountains I saw the mines from which come the antimony we use for eye makeup and so much of the gold stored in Egypt's treasuries. In the deep forests, among ebony trees and other costly woods, I saw wild monkeys like our own pets, and the giant beasts whose ivory tusks our artists value most of all materials for carving ornaments. Here the hunters chased a fine leopard into their net. From its cage slung on long poles it kept snarling and scratching at the men who carried it to our ships.

"Back at the coast, trade had been so good our ships could hold no more. We gave the head men a farewell banquet of all our good foods of Egypt and sailed for home. Every ship rode deep in the water, so heavily laden was our fleet with all the strange and valuable products of the wonderful Land of Punt. And all the way home the monkeys climbed the sails, and there was one that aped our captain in every gesture of command."

This page is for your own notes and illustrations

Sixth of a Series on
HOLIDAY IN ANCIENT EGYPT

A PARTY
IN ANCIENT EGYPT

by

HARRIET SMITH

Raymond Foundation



Museum Stories, No. 372

November 5, 1960

A Party in Ancient Egypt

The sun had traveled halfway down the western sky when the guests started arriving at the gates of Lord Nehsi's estate in Luxor, southern suburb of Thebes, capital city of ancient Egypt. As they stepped out of their litters they could hear music from the garden, where blind musicians sitting under the grape arbor were singing a popular song, "Spend the Day Merrily." The words of the song said: "Think only of joy . . . put garlands and lotus flowers on those you love . . . smell the perfumed oils." And that was just what was happening!

As each guest came into the garden, a servant put a wreath of flowers around his neck, and when they all went into the banquet hall it smelled even more like a garden indoors than outside. While slave women brought bronze basins and pitchers of perfumed water to wash the hands of the guests, other maids placed on top of the head of each man and woman a ball soaked in perfumed oil called *quemi*. This perfume would keep trickling down into their wigs throughout the feast. Only the host and hostess and their most honored guests sat in chairs, beside

small tables that were piled with food, fruit, and flowers. The rest of the company sat on rugs on the floor, picnic style. Merryat was too young for a place at such a formal banquet. Watching from the balcony with the other children she could see the maids moving from guest to guest, offering to pour more meat-sauce from tall slim bottles onto the food piled in din-



ner plates like our soup bowls. The diners ate with their fingers and drank from goblets of white stone, or blue and green molded glass, or even silver and gold.

It wouldn't have been much fun just watching the grownups eat, but for Egyptian children a banquet was like going to a show. The chief steward (butler), as soon as he had made sure that everyone was served, clapped his hands. From the side door there was an answering stamp of feet in time with the clinking of castanets and kettledrums. In came the first act: five Syrian slave girls, dressed in long thin robes. Two pairs of dancers turned slowly and gracefully as the fifth girl sang and clapped her hands to mark the time. The guests clapped their hands too when they recognized the singer, a favorite entertainer trained at the best school for girl singers at Memphis, ancient sacred city of North Egypt.

Merryat thought the foreign dancing girls were pretty, but she preferred more action and gaiety, like the tumbling act that followed. These men came in turning cartwheels in time to very fast music and then leaped on each other's shoulders to form pyramids. We'd call such skillful acrobatic stunts gymnastics, but to the ancient Egyptians any moving in time to music—whether merely graceful gesturing of the arms or vigorous acrobatics—was considered dancing.

The next act was best of all. These Egyptian girls weren't much older than Merryat. Dressed in very short skirts with bright ribbons wrapped around their bodies, they came skipping into the open space in the center of the dining hall, tossing bright red balls back and forth to each other without missing a beat of the music. First they took turns doing all kinds of juggling tricks, and then they played a sort of ball game—still in time with the music—with the smaller of each pair of girls riding pick-a-back on her partner. The act was ending, with all four girls at once trying to keep as many balls as possible in the air, when Merryat dozed off. Thoughts of tomorrow's festival and of all the wonders of Punt were bouncing around in her dreams like dozens of the gayly colored juggling-balls as her nurse carried her to bed.

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Seventh of a Series on
HOLIDAY IN ANCIENT EGYPT

HOLIDAY IN THEBES

by

HARRIET SMITH

Raymond Foundation



Museum Stories, No. 373

November 12, 1960

Holiday in Thebes

No school, no work today in Thebes, capital of ancient Egypt! Everyone was up by sunrise, getting ready to go into the city to see the procession of tribute-bearers from the expedition just returned from Punt. There was always a parade whenever an Egyptian expedition came back from a war in foreign lands, showing off loot and captives. But today a peaceful expedition of explorers brings strange and wonderful gifts for Egypt's Queen from the farthest-known land in the world.

Word had gotten around that there'd be live animals in today's parade because Lord Nehsi, leader of the expedition, had sent for the keeper of his private zoo to supervise unloading them. And Saab, son of this gamekeeper, was to report at the mansion this morning to walk beside the litter of their landlord's wife and little daughter and help clear the way through the crowds gathering in town for the parade. Every two minutes Saab jumped up from his breakfast of barley bread and onions to run outside and see whether the slaves had brought the litter to the gateway of the great house. While he ate, his mother rubbed on him some of the family's precious supply of perfumed oil, kept in a jar in a niche in the mud wall of their cottage. Even the poorest Egyptian was perfumed for festivals, and Saab was still rubbing off some that had trickled from his shaven head into his ear as he dashed into the courtyard of the manor house. Lord Nehsi's wife and young Lady Merryat were just stepping into their litter—a platform covered with cushions and with a carved and painted wooden top to shade the ladies from the sun. Four men stood on either side of the litter, ready to carry it by the long poles along each side of the platform. The Overseer gave Saab a stick and told him to walk at the side of the little girl to shield her from being jostled by the crowds. Off they start.

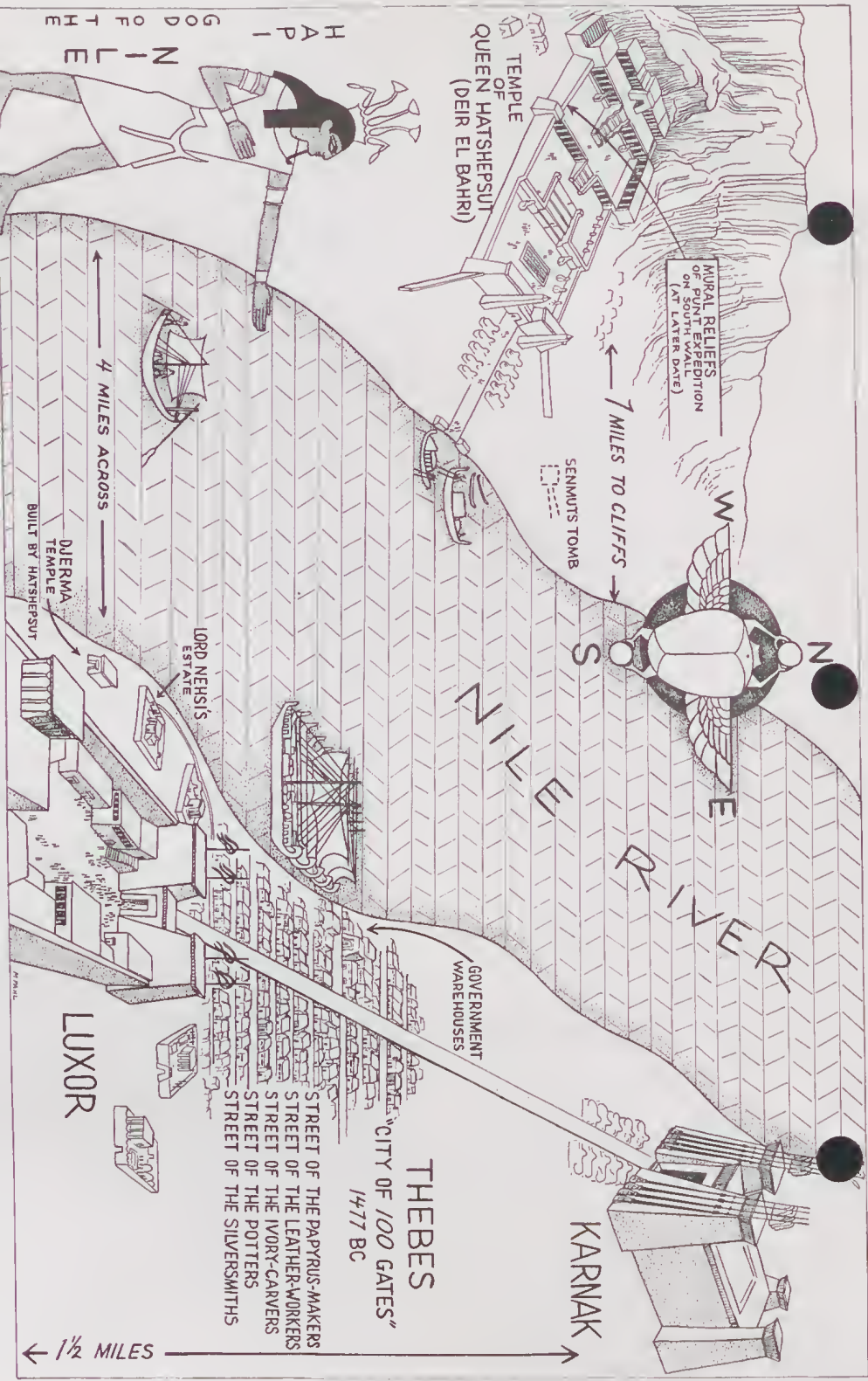
Jogging along the path beside the river bank, they can look across at the new temple with its scaffoldings still throwing spider-web shadows against the cliffs. From the temple's own boat-landing, a raised road leads up the valley slope between

rows of sphynxes—stone statues with the body of a crouching lion and the Queen's face. From an entrance between two towers, a ramp slopes up to the first of the three terraces. Little specks moving around on the bare terraces look like ants from this distance, but Merryat knows they must be the royal gardeners preparing the soil for the Sun-God's garden of incense trees her father has brought from Punt.

They turn inland between the walled houses and fields of the other noble families whose estates surround the Palace in Luxor, this southern suburb of Thebes. Narrow roads led from every direction into the downtown district of Thebes, known throughout the ancient world as "City of the Hundred Gates." Today everyone is heading for the wide, raised highway, sort of a throughway for processions between the Palace and the Karnak temple of Amon, the national religious center, which was the northern suburb of the capital city.

From the height of the processional road they can see the five ships anchored at the quay in the heart of town. Merryat keeps bobbing up on her knees to see whether the parade is starting yet up the road from the river to the boulevard. By now they're in the crowded city, where one-story adobe houses of craftsmen share common walls, like a honeycomb stretching out from either side of the main road. (Workers in each trade lived close together with their shops in front of their living quarters along their own street, much as in Oriental cities of today.) Past the Street of the Silversmiths . . . and the Potters . . . and the Ivory-Carvers . . . and the Leather-Workers. In the crowd at the intersection of the Street of Papyrus-Makers, Saab sees his friend Ursu waving at him.

People are standing on the flat roofs too. From the top of a government warehouse a man is making sketches of the ships. Merryat's mother recognizes him as the same court artist the Queen sent to make an official portrait of Lord Nehsi before he left for Punt. He's stationed here to draw pictures of the procession for the Queen's official record of the expedition. Now the crowd is shouting, but even louder can be heard the rumble of drums. Here comes the parade!



H A P - N - L E
G O D O F T I E

TEMPLE
OF
QUEEN HATSHAPSUT
(DEIR EL BAHR)

MURAL RELIEFS
OF PUNT EXPEDITION
(AT LATER DATE)

7 MILES TO CLIFFS

SEMNAUTS TOMB

4 MILES ACROSS

DUERMA
TEMPLE
BUILT BY HATSHAPSUT

LORD NEUSIS'S
ESTATE

GOVERNMENT
WAREHOUSES

LUXOR

THEBES
"CITY OF 100 GATES"
1477 BC

KARNAK

STREET OF THE PAPYRUS-MAKERS
STREET OF THE LEATHER-WORKERS
STREET OF THE IVORY-CARVERS
STREET OF THE POTTERS
STREET OF THE SILVERSMITHS

1 1/2 MILES

Eighth of a Series on
HOLIDAY IN ANCIENT EGYPT

PARADE OF
THE TREASURES FROM PUNT

by

HARRIET SMITH

Raymond Foundation



Museum Stories, No. 374
November 19, 1960



Parade of the Treasures from Punt

Everyone for miles around Egypt's ancient capital city had come into Thebes for the celebrations. People lined the main street and crowded on the rooftops to watch the procession approaching from the city harbor. All were in a happy holiday mood, but the most excited child in the whole city was Merryat. Many months ago Queen Hatshepsut had sent the little girl's father to explore the far-off Land of Punt, and the Egyptians were eager to see what treasures he had brought back. There weren't any circus parades in those days, but it was almost like one whenever an Egyptian expedition came home, bringing strange wild animals and people, too—giants and dwarfs, dark-skinned or light—in gay foreign costumes.

Up near the road from the quay the people started shouting and cheering when they saw the leaders of the parade turn into the processional highway. First came thirty-two priests of Amon, carrying a golden litter on which rested a small boat beautifully decorated with religious standards and symbols. The Sun-God himself was supposed to be the passenger riding inside this sacred boat to the palace for the official presentation of the treasures from Punt.

After the priests marched most of the sailors of the expedition. They carried green boughs as symbols of their triumphant homecoming. Other crewmen and some of the natives of Punt who had returned with the expedition followed, carrying rich gifts from their country. The Egyptians spoke of these products of Punt as "gifts" because they liked to think that other nations so feared Egypt's military power that they sent tribute (something like taxes) to keep on friendly terms, but this procession was different from the earlier (and later) triumphal return of conquering armies with loot. This expedition had been sent in peace and was returning with natural products obtained



by trading things manufactured in Egypt. Now they proudly carried the jars of gold ore and nets full of big gold rings and held high the trays of precious incense.

Next came the delegation of Puntites. These foreigners, with their dark skins and their hair in pigtails and their bright yellow kilts, looked gaudy beside the white-robed Egyptians. They led chattering baboons and monkeys, and some carried a cage in which the leopard Merryat's father captured was still snarling and clawing at his bearers. Still another group carried elephants' tusks, ebony wood, and spices.

The onlookers could hardly believe their eyes, or their noses, as the next group passed by. This was the first time anyone in Egypt had seen the live trees from whose sap incense was made. It took two men to carry each of the thirty-one heavy baskets, each hanging from a long pole. And in each of the baskets a healthy incense tree was actually growing! The expedition had succeeded in the mission on which the Queen had sent it to the ends of the earth. Here was the Sun-God's garden of *living* fragrance for his new temple!

Marching proudly behind the incense trees came the royal ambassador. Merryat was proud too when she saw that her father had a military guard of honor. Behind this escort came twelve litter-bearers with the Queen's empty throne chair.

As the onlookers fell in behind the procession to push through the palace gateway, Merryat and her mother were close to a Punt native with a monkey perched on his shoulder. The way the monkey was gesturing and chattering, as if he were directing the traffic, made Merryat sure this was the same one her father had told about imitating the ship-captain's orders. He wasn't acting as if he appreciated the honor of being presented to the Queen, who was waiting on the palace balcony to receive all these strange and precious gifts, brought from the farthest land of the world in honor of Egypt's Sun-God.

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Ninth of a Series on
HOLIDAY IN ANCIENT EGYPT

AT THE PALACE

by

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Raymond Foundation



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At the Palace

Senmut, Minister of Public Works and Guardian of the Crown Princess Nefrure, lifted the little girl higher so that she could see over the palace balcony. The great procession was crowding through the North Gate into the palace courtyard to present to Egypt's Queen the wonderful gifts her explorers had brought from the faraway Land of Punt.

Though the palace was called "The Great House," it was really a group of large wooden buildings enclosed by a tall wall. Government storehouses and royal treasury buildings lined the walls on either side of the gate to the processional highway, and the royal residence was built across the entire south end of the giant courtyard. On the great balcony, built all the way across the second story of the palace, the royal family, with their court attendants, made public appearances.

Today, Queen Hatshepsut stood at the middle of the balcony with her fan-bearers and standard-bearers behind her. She was dressed in the traditional costume of the Paraoh, holding the scepter and flail (a miniature whip), and with the tall double crown and royal cobra symbol on her brow. She even wore a little fake beard, hooked over her ears like spectacles. Her daughter Nefrure too wore the royal symbol on her forehead, and her hair was shaved off one side, leaving a long lock over her right ear, like a prince. Seeing the child today in the arms of her guardian gave the court sculptor his idea for the portrait statue that Senmut had commissioned him to make.

The parade poured through the gate until the whole courtyard was filled with people in strange costumes, piles of treasures, and more animals than Nefrure had seen together in all her life. She shrank back when a tall, spotted creature with a long neck poked his head right over the balcony rail, but Senmut said that it was just a harmless "camel-leopard" (giraffe). Right below them an excited monkey was chattering and jumping from the shoulder to the head of the Punt native trying to calm him. Suddenly it broke loose and disappeared in the crowd. There it was again, climbing to the balcony! As it

scrambled along the railing straight toward the Queen, Senmut grabbed its dangling leash and held the frightened little fellow. Safe on each arm of the Royal Architect, the princess and the monkey watched while the Queen stepped forward to point out the choicest gifts to be presented to the Sun-God as his share of the treasure from Punt.

First she ordered the temple gardeners to take the thirty-one live incense trees and plant them in Amon's new garden. On a big balance scale ten feet high, treasury officials were weighing giant rings of gold and measuring out Amon's share of dried incense from piles twice as high as a man. They made separate stacks of ivory tusks, ebony wood, and leopard skins; and as her special gift for the Sun-God the Queen selected the live leopard caught by Lord Nehsi himself.

The little princess was getting very tired. As Senmut turned away to take her into the palace to rest for the royal audience tomorrow, Nefrure whispered that she didn't see what use the Sun-God would have for such a mischievous monkey, and so they took him along too.

The Queen had summoned her officials and nobles to gather in the great audience hall of the palace on the following day to hear her official report on the success of her greatest venture. Sitting on her throne, with Lord Nehsi, leader of the Punt expedition, and Senmut on either side in the places of honor at her feet, she reminded them all of Amon's command to her, "Establish a Punt in my House." Announcing that the whole story of the expedition would be carved on the wall of the Sun-God's new temple, Queen Hatshepsut ended her report proudly, "It was done. I have made for him a Punt in his garden just as he commanded me" and "all the luxurious marvels of Punt were brought to my palace in one collection."

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